

Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2009

The President's News Conference With Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama of Japan in Tokyo, Japan

November 13, 2009

Prime Minister Hatoyama. President Obama, I would like to welcome you to Japan. I'd like to express my heartfelt welcome to you. Is it very hard—despite the tragedy of the mass shooting in your country, that you have taken time out of your busy schedule to come and join us here today. We're very thankful for you—to you. And today we have had a 90-minute, very intensive discussion. I'm very happy to have had this opportunity to hold this discussion.

Well, we've come to call each other Barack and Yukio. I think we've quite—I've grown quite accustomed to calling each other by our names. And we did cover a lot of ground today. First, for Japan's diplomacy, the U.S.-Japan alliance is the cornerstone. And this is one thing that I've stressed. But as time changes and as the international environment changes, there is a need for us to further develop and deepen the U.S.-Japan alliance to make it even more constructive and future-oriented alliance. And this was what I proposed today.

And the U.S.-Japan alliance—well, actually, it so happens that next year marks the 50th anniversary of the revision of the U.S.-Japan security treaty. And starting from today we'll be spending a year to start a new process of deliberation. And I have made this proposal, and President Obama has given his consent and support towards this idea.

Now, the U.S.-Japan alliance, looking at it from the security front, naturally we have to cooperate in proliferation deterrence, on information protection, missile defense, and the use of outer space, amongst others. We need to consider these new systems for issuing security. And this is my thinking.

But the U.S.-Japan alliance is not just focused on security—for example, disaster prevention or health, education. We had many levels—and also environmental issues as well. We need to cooperate in all these areas so as to cooperate in the Asia Pacific and others so that we can further deepen our bilateral alliance. I believe that we have reached an agreement on these points.

Now, turning our eyes to the global situation, again, there are different topics that we've covered. From our side, I've talked about Afghanistan and our support to Afghanistan. Well, to Afghanistan, we will not be taking part in the refueling, but instead, providing civil assistance, and we are planning to mainly provide civil assistance of 5 billion yen in 5 years for agriculture, building of infrastructures, schools. So this is the type of assistance we want to provide. And also to improve security, we want to support the police force in Afghanistan. Furthermore, for the former soldiers, we want to provide vocational training. These are the types of things that we want to conduct.

I have communicated this to the President, and towards this new assistance package, President Obama, in principle, has stated his gratitude, appreciation towards this assistance. And furthermore, when it comes to assistance to Afghanistan, it's important that we try to directly talk with one another as to the assistance to be provided.

Now, in the area of climate change, again, we have talked on this subject. By 2015 [2050]^{*}, I have set out this goal of an 80 percent reduction. And both Japan and U.S. have agreed on this. And we want to make COP 15 a success, and we agreed to cooperate towards this end. And including China and others, there are other issues that needs to be resolved, and therefore, we need to collaborate to address these challenges.

Now, in regards to nuclear disarmament, again, we have agreed to cooperate with one another. Now, in regards to nuclear issues and also climate change, we are going to—we have issued a joint statement. And I do believe that this is quite innovative in itself, and the fact that we can take up these issues as core issues at the summit meeting is something of vital importance.

Now, on the economic front—well, the economy was not a major issue this time, but again, this might reflect the times in which we're living. And over dinner, maybe, we hope to be able to discuss the issue of the economy.

Now, in relation to nuclear issues, North Korea, Iran was also discussed from President Obama. And again, we have agreed to closely cooperate with one another. And Special Representative Bosworth will be visiting North Korea—or may be visiting North Korea shortly. But this is on the premise of the six-party talks. And I do endorse this thinking and have stated so to the President.

And in regards to Iran, again, we have to support—we would like to support the approach to Iran. On the one hand, we want to emphasize our historic relationship, but also, at the same time, I promise to strengthen our alliance vis-a-vis Iran.

And also, again, in Asia, President Obama has stated that we have some—we do have a vital role to play, especially in East Asia. I have set out the concept of East Asian community, and this is because I believe that there is this alliance as the cornerstone on which we can rely.

And in Asia, the fact that the U.S. presence increases is something that have great extension towards at various levels in Asia and East Asia and Asia on the whole. And both Japan and the United States should deepen, and as a result, in East Asia, we hope to bring about peace, stability, and economic prosperity in this region. And this is something that we have pledged.

I don't want to take up all the time myself, and therefore, I'd like to conclude. But I do think that this summit meeting was extremely meaningful. And on this note, I'd like to once again say that I am very grateful to Barack, President Obama, to take time to join us here at Japan. And also, I'm thankful that he's chosen Japan as his first leg to his visit to Asia. And as Prime Minister, representing the Japanese people, I'd like to express my gratitude. Thank you.

Moderator. And next, President Obama, please.

President Obama. Well, good evening. It is a great honor to be making my first trip to Japan as President of the United States. I have fond memories of visiting Japan in my youth. I've been looking forward to this trip for some time. I'm only sorry that Michelle and the girls could not join us. The girls have been studying Japan in school, and so they have a great interest in Japanese culture. And hopefully, I'll be able to bring them next time.

^{*} White House correction.

I want to thank the warm welcome that Prime Minister Hatoyama and the Japanese people have extended. I appreciate the graciousness with which you understood the delay that took place as a consequence of the tragedy at Fort Hood, Texas.

Japan is my first stop as President in Asia. I began my trip here in Tokyo because the alliance between the United States and Japan is a foundation for security and prosperity, not just for our two countries but for the Asia Pacific region. In a few months, we'll be marking the 50th anniversary of our alliance, which is founded on shared values and shared interests, that has served our people so well and has provided peace and security for the region in an unprecedented way.

That anniversary, as Prime Minister Hatoyama pointed out, represents an important opportunity to step back and reflect on what we've achieved, celebrate our friendship, but also find ways to renew this alliance and refresh it for the 21st century. Both Yukio and I were elected on the promise of change, but there should be no doubt, as we move our nations in a new direction, our alliance will endure and our efforts will be focused on revitalizing that friendship so that it's even stronger and more successful in meeting the challenges of the 21st century. It's essential for the United States, it's essential for Japan, and it's essential for the Asia Pacific region.

Throughout my trip and throughout my Presidency, I intend to make clear that the United States is a Pacific nation, and we will be deepening our engagement in this part of the world. As I said to Prime Minister Hatoyama, the United States will strengthen our alliances, build new partnerships, and we will be part of multilateral efforts and regional institutions that advance regional security and prosperity.

We have to understand that the future of the United States and Asia is inextricably linked. The issues that matter most to our people, issues of economic growth and job creation, nonproliferation, clean energy, these are all issues that have to be part of a joint agenda. And we had very productive discussions about these issues this evening.

It's true that because of the strength of our economic ties, that was not the first item on our agenda, but we are fortunately going to have the opportunity to spend a lot of time discussing that in Singapore in the coming days. As the world's two leading economies, we have spent a lot of time working together in the G-20 to help bring the world back from the brink of financial crisis, and we're going to continue to work to strengthen our efforts so that we can expand job growth in the future. And we will be discussing with our APEC partners how to rebalance our deep economic cooperation with this region to strengthen our recovery.

The Prime Minister and I discussed our cooperation on Afghanistan and Pakistan. And I did thank the people of Japan and the Prime Ministers for the powerful commitment of a—\$5 billion over the next 5 years to support our shared civilian efforts in Afghanistan, as well as the commitment of a billion dollars to Pakistan.

This underscores Japan's prominent role within a broad international coalition that is advancing the cause of stability and opportunity in Afghanistan and Pakistan. And I shared with the Prime Minister our efforts in refining our approach to make it more successful in the coming year.

We discussed our shared commitment to stopping the spread of nuclear weapons and, ultimately, seeking a world without them. Since I laid out a comprehensive agenda in Prague to pursue these goals, Japan has been an outstanding partner in those efforts. And together, we passed a historic resolution in the Security Council last September. We are building a new

international consensus to secure loose nuclear materials and strengthen the nonproliferation regime.

And to that end, we discussed both North Korea and the situation in Iran, recognizing that it's absolutely vital that both countries meet their international obligations. If they do, then they can open the door to a better future. If not, we will remain united in implementing U.N. resolutions that are in place and continuing to work in an international context to move towards an agenda of nonproliferation.

Finally, we discussed our partnership on energy issues and climate change. The United States and Japan share a commitment to developing the clean energy of the future, and we're focused on combating the threat of climate change. This is an important priority for us; I know it's an important priority for the people of Japan. And we discussed how we can work together to pave the way for a successful outcome in Copenhagen next month.

So I believe that we are off to a very successful start. I'm looking forward to continuing the conversation during dinner, as well as, as we both travel to Singapore. And I am confident that we will continue to strengthen the U.S.-Japan alliance so that it serves future generations.

Thank you very much.

Moderator. Thank you very much. Now I'd like to proceed to questions. I will appoint the person, and once you are appointed, please come to the microphone, state your name and affiliation and also to whom—please make clear to whom you want to pose your question.

On behalf of the Japanese press, please.

Japan-U.S. Relations/U.S. Military Installations in Japan/Nuclear Nonproliferation

Q. Fuji Television. Matsuyama is my name. I'd like to ask both leaders—first to Prime Minister Hatoyama, you have stated that you would like to see Japan enjoy a more equal relationship with the United States in talks about Afghanistan and also the stop—the ending of the refueling operations and global warming and nuclear disarmament. Do you think that you're able to talk as equal partners and gain understanding on this point, especially on the Futenma relocation? How—there is the observation that this will be a difficult issue to resolve, but how did you explain about how to resolve the timeline for resolving this issue?

And to President Obama, you are a proponent of a nuclear-free world, and you've stated, possible, you would like to visit Hiroshima and Nagasaki while in office. Do you have this desire? And what is your understanding of the historical meaning of the A-bombing in Hiroshima and Nagasaki? Do you think that it was the right decision?

And also considering the North Korean situation, how do you think the U.S.-Japan alliance should be strengthened, and how should both countries cooperate in the field of nuclear disarmament?

And also on the Futenma relocation issue, by when do you think the issue needs to be resolved? And—well, if should it be that Japan carry over the discussion—decision to next year or decide on something outside of what is being discussed, how would you respond?

Moderator. Starting with Prime Minister.

Prime Minister Hatoyama. Let me start. Well, you've asked a great deal of questions to, especially, President Obama, but I'd like to talk about the equal relationship. But before I state so, the President himself has said, naturally, that we are equal partners and should be equal

partners. So in this context, we have talked about the assistance to Afghanistan, climate change, and furthermore, nuclear abolishment. And I think you can ask him, but I do believe that he has regarded us, Japan, as an equal partner. I have raised a number of issues on my side, and I think this is proof of our equal partnership.

On the issue of the relocation of the Futenma Air Station, in regards to this issue, well, to give you the conclusion, there is the high-level working group. We've set up this group so as to be able to resolve the issue as early as possible. I've stated this, and my commitment was also expressed during our talks.

But before that, I have explained why we have this discussion, and under the previous Government, the U.S.-Japan agreement needs to be regarded seriously. During the election campaign, especially to the Okinawans, I've stated that we would consider relocation outside of Okinawa and outside of the country. It is a fact that we did campaign on this issue, and the Okinawans do have high expectations.

It will be a very difficult issue for sure, but as time goes by, I think it will become even more difficult to resolve the issue. Especially the residents in the Futenma district will find it even more difficult to resolve the issue as time goes by. So we do understand that we need to resolve the issue as soon as possible, and we'll make every effort to resolve the issue as quickly as possible within the working group.

And we hope that this will lead the way to strengthening our alliance, and I sincerely hope that such discussions will take place within the working group. And this is something that I have communicated to the President.

Moderator. President, please.

President Obama. Well, first of all, I am impressed that Japanese journalists use the same strategy as American journalists—[laughter]—in asking multiple questions.

Let me, first of all, insist that the United States and Japan are equal partners. We have been, and we will continue to be. Each country brings specific assets and strengths to the relationship, but we proceed based on mutual interest and mutual respect, and that will continue.

That's reflected in the Japan-U.S. alliance. It will be reflected in the resolution of the base realignment issues related to Futenma. As the Prime Minister indicated, we discussed this. The United States and Japan have set up a high-level working group that will focus on implementation of the agreement that our two Governments reached with respect to the restructuring of U.S. forces in Okinawa, and we hope to complete this work expeditiously.

Our goal remains the same, and that's to provide for the defense of Japan with minimal intrusion on the lives of the people who share this space. And I have to say that I am extraordinarily proud and grateful for the men and women in uniform from the United States who help us to honor our obligations to the alliance and our treaties.

With respect to nuclear weapons and the issues of nonproliferation, this is an area where Prime Minister Hatoyama and I have discussed repeatedly in our meetings. We share, I think, a vision of a world without nuclear weapons. We recognize, though, that this is a distant goal, and we have to take specific steps in the interim to meet this goal. It will take time. It will not be reached probably even in our own lifetimes. But in seeking this goal, we can stop the spread of nuclear weapons, we can secure loose nuclear weapons, we can strengthen the nonproliferation regime.

As long as nuclear weapons exist, we will retain our deterrent for our people and our allies, but we are already taking steps to bring down our nuclear stockpiles and—in cooperation with the Russian Government—and we want to continue to work on the nonproliferation issues.

Now, obviously, Japan has unique perspective on the issue of nuclear weapons as a consequence of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. And that, I'm sure, helps to motivate the Prime Minister's deep interest in this issue. I certainly would be honored, it would be meaningful for me, to visit those two cities in the future. I don't have immediate travel plans, but it's something that would be meaningful to me.

You had one more question, and I'm not sure I remember it. Was it North Korea?

North Korea

Q. It was whether or not you believe that the U.S. dropped a nuclear weapon on Hiroshima and Nagasaki—it was right?

President Obama. No, there were three sets of questions, right? You asked about North Korea?

Q. Yes, North Korea as well, yes.

President Obama. Yes. With respect to North Korea, we had a extensive discussion about how we should proceed with Pyongyang. Obviously, we were disturbed by the testing that took place, some of the belligerent actions that had taken place in an earlier period of this year. We have continued to say that our goal is a non-nuclear Korean Peninsula. That's vital for the security of East Asia.

And the United States and Japan, with the other members of the six-party talks, will continue to work to show North Korea that there is a pathway, a door, for them to rejoin the international community that would serve their people well and, I believe, enhance their security over the long term. They have to walk through that door. In the meantime, we will continue to implement the sanctions that have already been put in place, and we will continue to coordinate closely with Japan and the other six-party members in helping to shape a strategy that meets our security needs and convinces Pyongyang to move in a better direction. Okay.

White House Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs. Jennifer Loven with AP—questions fewer in number. [Laughter]

Trial of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed/Military Operations in Afghanistan

Q. Thank you, Mr. President, Mr. Prime Minister. President Obama, on—how can you assure the American people that a trial of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed—now that your administration has now decided will take place in a civilian court in New York—will be safe and secure, but also not result in an innocent verdict for him?

And on Afghanistan, if I might, can you explain to people watching and criticizing your deliberations what piece of information you're still lacking to make that call?

And if I could add one to the Prime Minister, please. Can you explain why your country decided not to continue refueling ships going to Afghanistan?

Moderator. Mr. President.

President Obama. With respect to Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, I believe that the Attorney General is going to be making an announcement this morning in the United States, this

evening here. I don't want to preempt his news conference. This is a prosecutorial decision as well as a national security decision.

Here's the thing that I will say. I am absolutely convinced that Khalid Sheikh Mohammed will be subject to the most exacting demands of justice. The American people will insist on it, and my administration will insist on it. And I'm sure we'll have additional things to say after the Attorney General's press conference.

With respect to Afghanistan, Jennifer, I don't think this is a matter of some datum of information that I'm waiting on. It's a matter of making certain that when I send young men and women into war and I devote billions of dollars of U.S. taxpayer money, that it's making us safer, and that the strategies that are placed not just on the military side but also on the civilian side are coordinated and effective in our primary goal, which is to make sure that the United States is not subject to attack and its allies are not subject to attack by terrorist networks, and that there is a stability in the region that helps to facilitate that larger goal.

And I recognize that there have been critics of the process. They tend not to be folks who, I think, are directly involved in what's happening in Afghanistan. Those who are recognize the gravity of the situation and recognize the importance of us getting this right.

And the decision will be made soon. It will be one that is fully transparent so that the American people understand exactly what we're doing and why we're doing it and what it will entail. It will also, I think, send a clear message that our goal here, ultimately, has to be for the Afghan people to be able to be in a position to provide their own security, and that the United States cannot be engaged in an open-ended commitment.

So I am very pleased with how the process has proceeded. And those who participated, I think, would acknowledge that it has been not a academic exercise, but a necessary process in order to make sure that we're making the best possible decisions.

Moderator. Prime Minister Hatoyama.

Prime Minister Hatoyama. I thank you for keeping it to just one question, having come all the way to Japan. Now, your question was about why we ended the refueling in the Indian Ocean. And we believe that Japan's assistance to Afghanistan will, in the larger context—terms should be considered. And—well, as antiterrorism, you know, to eradicate terrorism, there is a need to take certain measures, but we have to consider what Japan should be doing in terms of antiterrorism. I think that it's important that we extend civilian support so as to eliminate terrorism from its roots. And I do believe that this is appropriate for Japan, and this is the first focal point I want to communicate to you.

And also, the refueling support, I've looked at the activities. Compared to the beginning, recently the refueling support is declining. Last month, in 1 month, there was only one—refueling for one ship. And we wonder how much effect we are bringing about. And so I think that we have to consider the meaning of this logistic support, and we've come to think that there is another type of assistance that is more appropriate for Japan.

We understand that the Afghans are suffering from poverty, and we have to save them from poverty. Also, security is something of a challenge, and we need to take new activities. And also, to the former soldiers, we have to provide vocational training so that they do not have to rely on their guns and they can lay down their guns and seek a more fulfilling life.

And I believe that for Japan, it is more appropriate, desirable, that we provide such civilian assistance. And as a result, conclusion, we have decided that instead of providing refueling, we provide an alternative package.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 8:24 p.m. in the Kantei. In his remarks, he referred to Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, former senior leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization who is currently in U.S. military custody. Prime Minister Hatoyama referred to U.S. Special Representative for North Korea Policy Stephen Bosworth. Prime Minister Hatoyama and a reporter spoke in Japanese, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

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